

May 15, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my dismay at your decision to allow photographs of yourself taken on September 11 to be used for fund-raising purposes and to ask that you immediately withdraw your approval of this effort. I hope you share my view that the memories of those who lost their lives on September 11 should not be sold to the highest bidder.

September 11 occupies a unique place in American history. It was a day of shock and sadness indelibly etched in the mind of every American. The Congress, your Administration and the American people joined together to mourn the loss of innocent lives. To now use an event that united America for divisive and partisan purposes is truly unconscionable. I also believe the families of the victims of September 11 deserve far better from their President. It is they who deserve to be the focus of our attention and care, not you or the Congress.

I wholeheartedly agree with Vice President Gore who stated, "While most pictures are worth a thousand words, a photo that seeks to capitalize on one of the most tragic moments in our nation's history is worth only one -- 'disgraceful.' I cannot imagine that the families of those who lost their lives on September 11 condone this -- and neither should the president of the United States."

I also hope that this decision is not a part of a larger strategy to use the nation's war effort for political objectives. Karl Rove declared in January, "We can go to the country on this issue because they trust the Republican Party to do a better job of protecting and strengthening America's military might and thereby protecting America." As Terry McAuliffe has said, "We know it's the Republicans' strategy to use the war for political gain, but I would hope that even the most cynical partisan operative would have cowered at the notion of exploiting the September 11 tragedy in this way."

As we enter this election season, I hope you will not seek to gain partisan political advantage through exploitation of what was a victory of the American people, who pulled together in an unprecedented manner to press forward with the nation's business and stand strong in the face of terror. I appreciate your immediate attention to this request.

Sincerely,

John Conyers, Jr.